Where are we and where do we want to go?

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Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI)
What are policy plans for languages?

19 April, 2017 - Minister Bruton to Prioritise Teaching of Foreign Languages

Ireland should benchmark ourselves against the best English-speaking country in the world for foreign languages and aim to emulate that performance within a decade, the Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton TD said at the TUI conference in Cork today (Wednesday).

Minister Bruton also said that we should aim to be within the top ten in Europe in this area. The Minister was speaking ahead of the publication of his Department's ten year strategy for foreign languages, a key commitment in the Action Plan for Education. The plan acknowledges that in general, Ireland, in common with other English-speaking countries, has not prioritised learning of foreign languages when compared to other countries, tending to regard English as a common international language of communication.
What are the specific targets of the proposed DES strategy?

• ALL Junior Cycle students to study a language by 2021
• 10% increase in number of students taking foreign languages at LC, with emphasis on languages other than French
• Increase quantity of students going on Erasmus and improve quality of students returning from Erasmus
• Support 20% of Higher Ed students to study a foreign language as part of their course (currently only 4%)
How will the targets be delivered?

• Make additional foreign languages available at Junior Cycle
• Introduce Mandarin Chinese for Leaving Certificate
• Double number of schools offering more than two foreign languages in TY
• Support heritage languages through short courses and new Leaving Cert subjects considering alternative models of provision
• Address Teaching Council registration issues
• Explore possibilities for CLIL
• CPD for teachers (language upskilling and teaching methodology)
• More foreign language assistants
• Mainstream use of CEFR and benchmarking with CEFR
• Minimum criteria for language proficiency entry levels to ITE programmes
What is the current provision of MFL in schools?
Relative uptake of Junior Cert Modern Languages: 2016

French: 19.64%
German: 12.12%
Spanish: 15.01%
Italian: 0.76%
No Language: 52.47%
Why do some students not take any MFL?

Quoting from Audit of Foreign Languages in Schools currently being carried out by PPLI for DES

• Languages are optional
• Poor uptake so reduced provision
• Students doing JCSP do not study a foreign language
• Exemptions and SEN
Relative Uptake of Leaving Cert Modern Languages: 2016

French: 17.80%
German: 15.40%
Spanish: 60.40%
Italian: 1.20%
Japanese: 0.80%
Russian: 0.80%
Arabic: 0.30%
Non-Curricular: 0.80%
Additional interesting facts re LC uptake

• Only 40% of LC sits are boys
• Roughly 25% of students do not sit any language in their LC
Some preliminary data from Foreign Languages Audit: More than one foreign language?

Is it possible for students to take more than one foreign language as part of the Leaving Certificate (Established) programme in your school?

Answered: 213   Skipped: 27
LCA Languages?

Which of the following foreign languages are available to students as part of your school's LCA programme?

Answered: 94    Skipped: 146
LCVP Languages?

Which of the following foreign languages are available to students as part of your school's LCVP?

Answered: 155   Skipped: 85
What languages are currently being taught as part of TY?

Which of these foreign languages are currently being taught as part of your Transition Year programme?

Answered: 219  Skipped: 21

- French
- German
- Spanish
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Italian
- Russian
- Other (please specify)
- No foreign language taught
- Portuguese
Additional languages interest?

Answered: 227  Skipped: 20
We don’t want any more languages...

Fear by language teachers that introducing another language would affect the numbers studying French i.e. lead to redeployment
Why Spanish?

• to increase enrolment in the college
• because it’s popular in other schools
• more widely spoken than German and has more appeal to students
• more internationally acceptable than German and easier than Chinese
• it’s an international Language
• it’s valuable for travel
• it’s extremely difficult to recruit French/German teachers
Why German?

• we are twinned with a school in Germany
• some students want it
• it’s useful for Science and Engineering
• it opens up employment opportunities
• we have a qualified teacher
Why Italian?

• it can be an easier language to learn for students with learning difficulties
• it is quite an accessible language to learn
• one of our neighbouring schools offers this language and it might be possible to share teaching resources.
Why Polish?

• There is a large Polish community locally

• The school community has a significant number of Polish families, with interest in taking the Polish language as a Leaving Certificate subject

• Polish is a subject that is now spoken by a lot of people in Ireland. It would be part of a inclusivity policy
Why Russian?

• We offer Russian as a TY module & have a teacher of Russian
• we have many students who can speak some Russian - I think they would like to maintain a high standard of spoken and written language
Why Chinese?

• A significant proportion of the world population speak Chinese and it would be valuable for Business and Tourism reasons
• it is hugely important both economically and culturally in this century
• The teacher has an interest in Chinese and has some basic modules done
• I believe that Chinese will be a necessary language in the future
• I feel that Chinese is an emerging language that will be necessary in the future for commerce and global business opportunities
Why Japanese?

- Significant interest in Japanese - students from this school have, for many years, enrolled on the PPLI's Saturday Japanese classes.
- Our students have a huge interest in Japanese and have indicated an interest in Chinese. Also, given the trend towards Asian markets and the expansion of Chinese trade, it would be a benefit to our students to take advantage of these trends.
French & German

It is a struggle to keep French viable against parental choice for Spanish.

“I have interviewed candidates for French teaching positions who cannot speak French”

“The lack of language teachers is a huge concern. We advertised a position for German last month - 22 hours. There were NO applicants. We re-advertised. Again - NO applicants”
Resources that would be required to introduce more languages

- Trained Teachers
- Up-skilling
- Teacher Hours
- Financial
- Spanish Teacher
- In-service
- Increased
- Staffing
- Language
- Funding
- Teaching
- Curriculum
- Teacher Allocation
- CPD
- Qualified Teachers
- Curricular Concession
- Additional
- Timetable
- Staff
- Polish
- Extra Allocation
- Ex-quota
- Student
- Chinese
What language teachers are in the system but not currently teaching languages?

Which of these languages are they qualified and registered to teach?

Answered: 93   Skipped: 147
Teachers capable of teaching additional languages?

Are there teachers in your school who, with further upskilling, would be capable of teaching any of the following foreign languages?

Answered: 215   Skipped: 25
What *can* be done to build capacity?
After-school classes?

“A system of 'hubs' offering evening classes in different languages could work - this school would be open to facilitating such initiatives. As the curriculum is already 'crowded', models of delivering heritage language programmes may need to be focussed outside of the normal school day...This school's experience of the PPLI's weekend Japanese classes has been extremely positive.”
Do we need to diversify our languages provision?

“The DES should focus on sustaining what we have on our curriculum instead of growing new languages which we don’t need. With the growth and effectiveness of technology everybody can translate.”

“Increasing the number of languages offered increases the likelihood of stand-alone (single) language classes at senior cycle i.e., higher and ordinary level in the same class. Due to the range of ability levels, this is stressful for the teacher and frustrating for the students. Neither group achieves its potential in such an environment.”
“...I believe that investment in supporting second level students to spend a period of time (at least a month) in the European country, whose language they are studying, is essential for the improvement in oral language acquisition standards. Let's do that first before offering any other language. Interest in, and proposals to offer other international languages has little to do with education and all to do with schooling for the market place. It is not an inclusive approach to education as only the more able student will succeed, as well as those who have the money to get the grinds in it! Linguists shouldn't have to tell a survey of this kind that Language Acquisition and Immersion are inextricably linked - speak to your Gaelscoileanna.”
What are Ireland’s foreign language export markets?

Jan-July 2017 (CSO)
Employment in Ireland by foreign enterprises

Employment in Ireland by non-English speaking foreign controlled enterprises

- France
- Germany
- Japan
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Sweden
- Switzerland
FDI to Ireland by relevant foreign languages in 2014
Presence of languages on the web?

- **French Language Ireland**
  - About 172,000,000 results (0.65 seconds)

- **German Language Ireland**
  - About 90,400,000 results (0.69 seconds)

- **Spanish Language Ireland**
  - About 65,800,000 results (0.56 seconds)

- **Italian Language Ireland**
  - About 65,200,000 results (0.56 seconds)

- **Chinese Language Ireland**
  - About 60,200,000 results (0.61 seconds)

- **Polish Language Ireland**
  - About 38,700,000 results (0.60 seconds)
A bigger challenge?

#languages 24-hour Trend Graph

Estimated Tweets per Hour (based on 1% Sample)
#foreignlanguages 24-hour Trend Graph

Estimated Tweets per Hour (based on 1% Sample)
#STEM 24-hour Trend Graph

Estimated Tweets per Hour (based on 1% Sample)

4:00 am 6:00 am 8:00 am 10:00 am 12:00 pm 2:00 pm 4:00 pm 6:00 pm 8:00 pm 10:00 pm
Is this the approach we should take?

#STEAM 24-hour Trend Graph

Estimated Tweets per Hour (based on 1% Sample)
KEEP CALM AND HEAR YOUR VOICE HEARD